

6 FAH-5 H-120 TEAM BUILDING AND COMMUNICATION

(CT:ICASS-5; 07-21-2006)
(Office of Origin: RM/ICASS)

6 FAH-5 H-121 TEAM APPROACH

(CT:ICASS-5; 07-21-2006)
(Applies to participating ICASS agencies)

It is essential that the council function as a team with the active participation and partnership of the service providers if it is to achieve improvements. Service providers will often be the largest resource customer for ICASS services and thus the largest beneficiary of reduced costs and improved service. For more information on building effective teams, there are exhibits at 6 FAH-5 Exhibit H-121, Teamwork.

6 FAH-5 H-121.1 Building a Better Team

(CT:ICASS-5; 07-21-2006)
(Applies to participating ICASS agencies)

- a. Building a strong team takes constant work. This is particularly true abroad where key members of the post community transfer every year. Despite efforts to increase the amount of formal training available to ICASS council members, the volatility associated with staffing posts abroad and the large number of people involved mean that there always will be at least some post ICASS council members who lack a basic understanding of ICASS. In addition, council members, like educators, medical personnel, corporate directors and other decision makers, have a continuing need for continuing education. Some posts have a practice of bringing ICASS council members, including service providers, together for a day of uninterrupted activity during which they look at past results, plan future goals, and strengthen bonds to and among the group. Such sessions can be useful in building or strengthening the ICASS team at post.
- b. The exhibits section at the end of this chapter contains several exercises that posts might consider employing in order to build or strengthen the team. Because the exercises involve all members of the council, including the service provider(s), use of a facilitator often proves effective. The facilitator could be a senior member of post management or of a customer agency that is not on the ICASS council but who is

skilled in facilitation. At least one post hired a resident U.S. citizen with a background in facilitation to assist the council. International schools sometimes have on the faculty individuals with facilitation skills and backgrounds. Some international schools bring in facilitators to conduct school board training and might be willing, if the council shares the cost, to add a separate day of council training to the itinerary. Regardless of whether post uses a facilitator, team-building activities are not successful as a quick fix or as a one-time experience. Rather, regular assessment of how the team is operating as well as periodic activities to strengthen the cohesiveness of the group are prerequisites for the continued effectiveness of the group working as a team. For those who question the wisdom of periodic investments in team building, stop and consider the time and effort spent at posts with dysfunctional post teams.

6 FAH-5 H-121.2 Teaming Techniques to Encourage High Productivity

(CT:ICASS-5; 07-21-2006)

(Applies to participating ICASS agencies)

To encourage high productivity, teaming techniques should:

- (1) Focus on “ends” (what we are here to accomplish);
- (2) Involve each team member in a decision that impacts him or her;
- (3) Set agendas and schedules as a team;
- (4) Set high standards and high expectations and encourage achievement;
- (5) Openly support the senior service provider(s) in actions consistent with expectations;
- (6) Provide formative and summative assessments: Recognize and reward achievement; cite areas for improvement fairly, tactfully and in private;
- (7) Maintain an effective flow of two-way communication with all council members;
- (8) Avoid imposing individual direction or personal standards;
- (9) Be sensitive to factors that cause dissatisfaction and frustration; and resolve conflicts in a timely manner;
- (10) Avoid surprises;
- (11) Forgive and forget small offenses; and
- (12) Celebrate even small successes.

6 FAH-5 H-122 COMMUNICATING AS A TEAM

(CT:ICASS-5; 07-21-2006)

(Applies to participating ICASS agencies)

Effective communications are essential to, among other things, providing the kind of transparency that is a bedrock principle of ICASS. The exhibits section of this chapter recommends tips a post ICASS team could use to enhance communications.

6 FAH-5 H-123 MANAGING CONFLICT

6 FAH-5 H-123.1 The Presence of Conflict

(CT:ICASS-5; 07-21-2006)

(Applies to participating ICASS agencies)

Conflict will always be a part of the working environment. The secret is knowing how to manage it! Conflict is natural and should be expected. Service recipients always will have expectations and desires that exceed available resources. In the face of such demands, some desires will be met, and others will be modified. The process of deciding which desires to meet, which to modify and how to modify them is a resolution of conflict. The strongest outcome of that process is consensus through negotiation. One can only achieve consensus when all participants to the conflict have a mutual motivation for resolving the issue. There must be some payoff for each of the participants. The exhibits section at the end of this chapter contains tips a post ICASS team might use if managing conflict is a concern.

6 FAH-5 H-123.2 Tips for Managing Hidden Agendas During Times of Conflict

(CT:ICASS-5; 07-21-2006)

(Applies to participating ICASS agencies)

Remember that the group is continuously working on two levels at once: the surface level and the hidden-agenda level. Consequently, the group may not move as fast on the surface tasks as the participants might expect. Look for the hidden agendas that are present. Recognition is a first step in a diagnosis of group difficulty. Sometimes a participant can make it easier for a group to bring its hidden agendas to the surface. The participant may say, for example, "I wonder if we have said all that we feel about the issue. Maybe we should take time to go around the table so that any further thoughts can be opened up." Some hidden agendas can be presented and talked about and should then become easier to handle. But many hidden

agendas would hurt the group more if they were talked about openly. Group participants need to be sensitive to the possible dangers and should try to recognize what a group can and cannot face at a given point. Do not scold or pressure a group when hidden agendas are recognized. They are present and legitimate and must be worked on in much the same manner as the surface task. At different times, hidden agendas should be given different amounts of attention, depending upon their influence on the surface task and the nature of the group and its participants.

6 FAH-5 H-124 THE ROLE OF COUNCIL CHAIR

6 FAH-5 H-124.1 Council's Leadership Team

(CT:ICASS-5; 07-21-2006)

(Applies to participating ICASS agencies)

The council chair, working group chair, DCM and senior service provider(s) are part of an informal leadership team for a post ICASS council. Mutual respect, trust and open communication among these leaders will enhance effective functioning of the council and promote/strengthen the ICASS team at post. As leaders, these individuals have a special responsibility to ensure that their actions, as well as their words, reflect the key principles outlined in this chapter for creating and fostering a positive climate for the post ICASS council. The example, positive or negative, set by the council's leadership team will be observed and impact the behavior of individual council members and service provider employees.

6 FAH-5 H-124.2 Council Chair as Team Builder

(CT:ICASS-5; 07-21-2006)

(Applies to participating ICASS agencies)

- a. While the council chair will not determine, by himself or herself, the success or failure of ICASS at a post, the individual in this critical leadership position can make a singular contribution toward building a stronger, more effective team. The council chair can promote positive action by the council and its members to define community needs and guide council members toward positive actions that will meet those needs. Individual chairs will excel in certain areas and need help from council members in others.
- b. When assessing the performance of incumbent chairs or recruiting prospective chairs, there are a number of points the council might consider. How does the council chair work with people? How does he or she cope with individuals holding vastly different opinions? How does he or she manage conflict? To what degree can council members rely on the

chair's word? Does the council chair demonstrate through actions, as well as words, a deep commitment to treating each agency equitably? How does the council chair promote communication, trust and respect for each customer agency and service-provider representative. What efforts does the council chair make to bring in marginalized customer-agency or service-provider representatives? How does the council chair handle dysfunctional behavior among council members or service provider personnel. What techniques does the council chair use to deal with attempts to sabotage team-building efforts? Can the council chair remain calm in the face of controversy and guide the team back to its core values? What kind of relations has the council chair established with the other members of the post ICASS leadership team? Does the council chair reach out to others, initiating contact, or does the council chair wait for others to come to him or her? What kind of listener is the council chair? How does he or she interpret nonverbal as well as verbal signals from council members and service-provider representatives? How adept is the council chair in defining and communicating his or her sense of council consensus?

- c. A council that has or recruits a chair who scores high on many of these points will be fortunate indeed. Such a council, led by an effective chair, has a better-than-average chance of making the ICASS process work well at post.

6 FAH-5 H-125 THROUGH H-129 UNASSIGNED

6 FAH-5 EXHIBIT H-121 TEAMWORK

(CT:ICASS-5; 07-21-2006)
(Applies to participating ICASS agencies)

ICASS council teamwork operates on two levels: The council working together and the council working together as a team with the service provider. Each level's success is predicated upon the talent and contribution of each team member.

Healthy teamwork is characterized by individuals who:

- (1) Contribute at their highest level of experience and expertise;
- (2) Demonstrate good faith and good will, focusing on what is best for the post;
- (3) Willingly subordinate their personal agendas to the will of the majority;
- (4) Honor individual diversity and contributions;
- (5) Demonstrate open, honest, and respectful communication and confidentiality;
- (6) Demonstrate trustworthiness in word and deed while extending trust to others;
- (7) Consciously relinquish the need to control all decisions; and
- (8) Listen well, seeking first to understand rather than to be understood.

Healthy teamwork does **not** exist when individuals:

- (1) Harbor hidden or individual agendas;
- (2) Exercise authoritarian leadership;
- (3) Make decisions in secret;
- (4) Show competitive behaviors;
- (5) Are disenfranchised with the council; and
- (6) Don't take responsibility for their behavior or that of the team.

When individuals undertake the responsibility to work together as a council, committing to forming a fully functioning leadership team, the following outcomes can be expected:

- (1) Fewer personal conflicts and confusion;
- (2) Shared purpose and goals;

- (3) Clearly stated and agreed upon roles;
- (4) More effective use of time;
- (5) Greater satisfaction through constructive contributions;
- (6) Higher levels of performance through coordinated efforts;
- (7) Increased support internally and externally; and
- (8) Greater interest of others in serving on the council.

Seven Characteristics of a High Performing Team

Purpose: Members of high performing teams share a strong sense of common purpose. Members are clear about what the team's work is and why it is important. Members have developed mutually agreed upon and challenging goals. Each member understands his or her role in realizing the vision.

Empowerment: Members are confident about the team's ability to overcome obstacles and to realize its vision. A sense of mutual respect enables members to share responsibilities, help each other out and take initiatives to meet challenges. Members have opportunities to grow and learn new skills. There is a sense of personal as well as collective power.

Relationships and communications: The team is committed to open communication and group members feel they can state their opinions, thoughts, and feelings without fear. Listening is considered as important as speaking. There is an atmosphere of trust and acceptance and a sense of community. Group cohesion is high.

Flexibility: Group members are flexible and perform different tasks and maintenance functions as needed. The team is fluid and open to both opinions and feelings, hard work and fun. Members recognize the inevitability and desirability of change, and adapt to changing conditions.

Optimal productivity: High performance teams produce significant results. There is a commitment to high standards and quality. The team has developed effective decision-making and problem-solving methods that result in optimum results and encourage participation and creativity.

Recognition and appreciation: Individual team accomplishments are frequently recognized by the team leader, as well as by team members, by celebrating milestones, accomplishments, and events. Members feel highly regarded within the team and valued by the organization (school district or agency). They experience a sense of personal satisfaction in relation to their contributions.

Morale: Members are enthusiastic about the work of the team and each person feels pride in being a member of the team. Confident and committed, members are optimistic about the future. There is a sense of excitement about individual and team accomplishments as well as the way team members work together. The team spirit is high.

Source: The One-Minute Manager Builds High Performing Teams. Ken Blanchard, Ph.D., Don Carew, Ph.D., and Eunice Partisi-Carew, Ed.D.

How Effective Is Your Team?

The best way to gauge your team's effectiveness is to study the group in action continually. Watch for once-positive team traits that may be waning as time passes and the novelty of team life wears off. The following test is based on material in Leonard R. Sayles' book, *The Working Leader* (The Free Press). Answer TRUE or FALSE after each statement.

- | | True | False |
|---|------|-------|
| 1. When team members ask that plans be modified because unexpected problems are developing, everyone is responsive. | | |
| 2. During change, team members try to find different ways to reach an objective. | | |
| 3. As we implement a new function, we always consider the impact that it might have. | | |
| 4. We look for what is right, not what is easy. | | |
| 5. Team members are always candid about their needs. | | |
| 6. Every team member can state his or her requirements both verbally and in writing. | | |
| 7. Teammates alert each other to possible difficulties of time, cost, or performance. | | |
| 8. Teammates who need help ask for it and receive it. | | |
| 9. When we are negotiating, teammates provide full information to each other. | | |
| 10. Once they realize that demands are impractical, team members compromise. | | |

YOUR TEAM'S EFFECTIVENESS: Many of these traits relate to team members' ability to be flexible and make trade-offs when they're required. A good leader, Sayles says, can use this study process to determine team strengths and weakness.

Time required:

individual 15 minutes

collective 30 minutes

Brainstorm ways/resources to improve team member performance.

6 FAH-5 EXHIBIT H-121.1

LEADERSHIP TEAM SELF-ASSESSMENT: A SPRINGBOARD FOR DISCUSSION

(CT:ICASS-5; 07-21-2006)
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Time required:
individual 30-60 minutes
collective 2-3 hours
Recommended facilitation
Cite examples
Debrief commitments to improve.

Answer YES or NO to the following questions. Use available space to share specific examples that substantiate your overall opinion and response to these questions on council relationships.

- ___ 1. In working meetings, do team members ignore each other's input?
- ___ 2. During work sessions, do members state their own ideas rather than build on the ideas of others?
- ___ 3. Are confidential council discussions leaked to nonteam members?
- ___ 4. Do private communication networks exist between council members and management of the organization?
- ___ 5. Do members criticize each other privately or to other members?
- ___ 6. Do members criticize each other in the media or other public settings?
- ___ 7. Do face-to-face criticisms lead to personal attack, defensiveness, name-calling, or arguments?
- ___ 8. Does the council disagree on its role and use of time?
- ___ 9. Do members regard themselves as representing particular constituencies rather than as part of a team?
- ___ 10. Do members have conflicting goals for the organization?
- ___ 11. Do members disagree on how meetings should be run?

- _____ 12. Do members boycott meetings to indicate displeasure with what is going on?
- _____ 13. When the chair asks for a consensus, check around the table: do certain members ask to pass, withholding their views until they hear the opinions of others?
- _____ 14. Do council members differ widely regarding the effectiveness of the management of the organization?
- _____ 15. Does voting (and disagreement on issues) occur along predictable lines?

Together Everyone Achieves More

Time required: 10 minutes.

Personal commitment to use as a debriefing tool after a team workshop.

Positive results for me in a teamwork environment:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

What will I personally improve about myself to encourage teamwork?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

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6 FAH-5 EXHIBIT H-123.1 TIPS FOR AVOIDING UNNECESSARY CONFLICT AND MANAGING CONFLICT DURING A COUNCIL MEETING

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(Applies to participating ICASS agencies)*

1. Resist the temptation to take a position before you have sufficient information.
2. Be careful about using hearsay evidence.
3. Be careful about jumping into someone else's territory.
4. Don't be so defensive.
5. Stay calm—lengthen your fuse.
6. Be long on listening.
7. Avoid being overly candid.
8. If things are getting out of hand, call for a recess.
9. Before you make a comment, be sure that it relates to the subject being discussed. Too much time is wasted when council members stray from the subject.
10. Irrational council members should not be allowed to continually disrupt the group. If necessary, have the entire council confront the disruptive individual with a clear statement of concern about disruption.